

## Lower Snake River District

*“Building and strengthening our relationships and partnerships with users of our public lands in southwestern Idaho is helping to create an environment of increased communication, effective consultation, and improved cooperation. This is resulting in improved stewardship and conservation of our natural resources.” Acting District Manager Dave Krosting*

### Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area

---

The BLM Lower Snake River District (LSRD) signed a new Memorandum of Understanding with the Idaho Army National Guard to authorize their continued use of the Orchard Training Area for the next 30 years. We spent \$2.5 million of Land and Water Conservation Funds to purchase a conservation easement on 2,120 acres of agricultural land in the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA). The LSRD constructed a shelter at Dedication Point to facilitate environmental education programs. We maintained and enhanced the Halverson Lakes Trail System. We constructed two restrooms and improved several campsites in the Snake River Canyon below Swan Falls Dam. We continued educating the public about the NCA, raptors, and habitat through programs, presentations, hikes, television, print media, and our Web site: [www.id.blm.gov/bopnca](http://www.id.blm.gov/bopnca). The District also completed the initial planning stages for restoring the sagebrush-steppe habitat of the NCA.

### Recreation

---

A total of 90 recreation sites in the LSRD received custodial maintenance. The Owyhee Field Office began a comprehensive roads and trails inventory of its 2.7 million-acre land base. We issued a contract for the initial interpretation of the roads and trails, which are depicted on 96 orthophoto quads. To date, on-the-ground verification of about 50 percent of the orthophoto data has been accomplished. When completed, the data and public input will be used to develop a Field Office Transportation Plan. The Owyhee Field Office received three grants from the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation to help in its comprehensive Travel Management efforts.

### Boise Front Open Space

The Open Space Management Plan for the Boise Front was completed in 2001 in partnership with Boise City, Ada County, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and Idaho Department

under a Memorandum of Understanding. This plan for the Capital City's backyard establishes goals and guidance for maintaining open space, watershed, and wildlife values while increasing fire protection and enhancing recreational opportunities. The agencies, individually and in partnership, are pursuing a variety of implementation actions to further the goals of the plan.

## Cultural Resources and Native American Activities

---

The LSRD partnered with Boise State University (BSU) to produce a written historical context on the Flint Historic Mining District. The Flint historic context is a new project in BLM's ongoing partnership with BSU Department of Anthropology. We are currently in the process of considering the effects of a proposed land sale on the Flint Historic Mining District. A BLM exhibit entitled "AGAIDUKA, Ancient fisherman of Southern Idaho" was developed and displayed at the Owyhee Historical Museum in Murphy, Idaho from April through June, 2002.

We supported District and Field Office work with American Indians on cultural resource protection issues of archeological sites, tribal treaty rights, trust resources, religious freedom issues, and consultation issues related to plan revisions. We continued the coordination and consultation forum with the Shoshone-Paiute and Shoshone Bannock American Indian Tribes through the "Wings and Roots" forum meetings to discuss BLM management issues, including Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing, conversion of historical Temporary Non Renewable to Annual grazing permits, proposals for wind energy projects, and other issues and opportunities.

## Lands Program

---

### *Bruneau-Jarbridge River System Land Withdrawal Extension*

The District initiated the process to extend a protective withdrawal for the Bruneau-Jarbridge and Sheep Creek River System. Two public meetings were held to solicit citizen input. Approval of these withdrawal extensions is pending BLM Washington Office concurrence.

## Air Force Training Range

---

Substantial progress was made toward implementing the Juniper Butte Range Withdrawal Act, which establishes a new Air Force training range in southwestern Idaho. We have issued all rights-of-way needed for the project, completed changes in grazing permits for permittees affected by the legislation, initiated a related study to assess recreation use in the Bruneau/Jarbridge

River System, and commented on the Air Force's draft plan for managing the natural resource values on lands withdrawn for military use.

## Land Use Planning

---

The scoping process for the Bruneau and the Snake River Birds of Prey Birds of Prey NCA Resource Management Plans (RMPs) has been completed. A Scoping Report that included public issues and planning criteria is out for public review and is available on the Idaho Planning Web page: [www.id.blm.gov/planning/index.htm](http://www.id.blm.gov/planning/index.htm). This Web page gives the interested viewer a one-stop shopping site for access to planning activities across Idaho.

We have developed a comprehensive public involvement process that provides for extensive opportunities for the public and other federal, state, tribal, and local governments and agencies to work with us in developing the two RMPs. This public process has been enhanced as a result of an assessment completed by the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution. Several recommendations were made to help us develop a process that is fully responsive to the various public interests in the public lands of southwestern Idaho. Both the public involvement process and assessment are also available on the Idaho Planning Website at <http://www.id.blm.gov/planning>.

We signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Owyhee County, which gives them official "Cooperating Agency" status under the National Environmental Policy Act during preparation of the RMPs. An Interagency Agreement with the Idaho Army National Guard was signed in August 2002 to guide their participation as a "Cooperating Agency" in the development of the Snake River Birds of Prey NCA Resource Management Plan.

## Noxious Weeds

---

The LSRD is actively participating in Cooperative Weed Management Associations to monitor the spread and control of noxious weeds. We completed cooperative agreements with 9 counties, which resulted in 4,200 acres being treated for weed control. The District also continued to maintain and improve strong ties with numerous counties through the Cooperative Weed Management Associations.

## Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species

---

### *Snake River Snails*

We initiated consultation under the Endangered Species Act with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding the impacts to Snake River snails from livestock grazing. This successful consultation enabled BLM to authorize Temporary Nonrenewable livestock grazing permits in southwestern Idaho while ensuring snails would not be affected by the management action.

### *Sage Grouse*

We participated with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and Owyhee County on a sage grouse plan for Owyhee County under the umbrella of the Statewide Idaho Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy Plan. Implementation of the plan, the first in Idaho, will result in the gathering of new data on the biology, distribution, and key habitat of the sage grouse, an Idaho sensitive species. We completed the Draft Jarbidge Area Sage Grouse Conservation Plan, which is currently out for public review and comment.

### *Slickspot Peppergrass*

The District initiated strategy development, conservation planning, and interim management for slickspot peppergrass (*Lepidium papilliferum*). This plant was proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act in July 2002. In the Jarbidge Field Office, we initiated conferencing/consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) related to proposed actions within the Resource Area. Critical habitat for the species is not expected to be designated in the near future. Affected public lands in the District could be as much as several hundred thousand acres.

### *Spotted Frog Cooperative Management Plan*

We are currently assisting the USFWS and Owyhee County Soil Conservation Commission in developing a cooperative management plan for the spotted frog on State and private lands.

### *Bull Trout Habitat Consultation*

In the Jarbidge Field Office, we completed required monitoring of Bull Trout Habitat as required by the Biological Opinion issues by the USFWS.

## Fire and Aviation

---

Due to prolonged drought conditions that did not allow normal growth of grasses and due to heightened public awareness of ongoing fires throughout the West, southwestern Idaho experienced significantly less burned acres than during an average year. In fact, 75 percent less acres burned than in a normal year. Fire starts were only somewhat decreased. Ninety-seven fire starts were recorded instead of a normal 120.

	Human	Lightning	Total Fires	Total Acres
2002	39	58	97	26,702
Average	88	43	120	99,000

This can also be attributed to an increased workforce that staffed the additional engines and equipment procured through the National Fire Plan in FY 2001. All engine and helitack crews were sent off-District for fire assignments at least once during the course of the summer, responding to incidents in Colorado, Arizona, California, Utah, and Wyoming. Perhaps most notable is the excellent safety record the organization maintained. There were no serious accidents or injuries, and extremely few minor ones. Safety awareness and commitment has prominently increased.

## *National Fire Plan Implementation*

---

### ***Fire Preparedness***

Several more supervisory or lead positions were added this year to better staff the eleven new engines and other equipment. Agreements were implemented with the U.S. Air Force, Duck Valley Indian Reservation, local fire departments, and other Forest Service and BLM units to either share stations or establish new stations for new crews. This enabled more effective placement of engines throughout the District. A new ready room was provided in Boise for those crews, and an air attack ramp was added to the Boise Helibase to better facilitate rapid air attack responses.

### ***Fuels Reduction***

Five fuels reduction projects were completed totaling 2,830 acres. Plans were completed for five other projects, and planning has begun on another seven projects.

### ***Wildland-Urban Interface***

The Idaho Implementation Strategy for the National Fire Plan was signed in June 2002, calling for county-based mitigation plans as the main framework for reducing the wildfire risk to

plans. A “Clean-Up Day” was held in Silver City, Idaho, which was enormously successful. Two-thirds of the small town’s population participated. Numerous fire prevention and education events were held throughout the District. The cooperative agencies successfully avoided entering into fire restrictions this season, mostly due to effective prevention efforts and public education.

### ***Rural Fire Assistance***

Thirty-Five rural fire departments shared \$230,000 in assistance to purchase training, prevention materials, personal protective equipment, clothing, radios, and other fire supplies. The first Interagency Fire Academy was held at Boise State University in June 2002, which had more than 1,000 students. Courses were held in basic firefighting, fire behavior, fire business management, crew supervision, and aircraft management.

### ***Fire Rehabilitation***

We rehabilitated 110,858 acres (72,842 treated and 38,016 rested for natural revegetation) for a cost of \$5.9 million. The rehabilitation effort encompassed 21 different projects. In addition, we constructed 105 miles of protective fence to protect burned and rehabilitated areas.

## **Rangeland Management Program**

---

### ***Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines***

Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines assessments were completed for 68 grazing allotments this year in the LSRD. Nearly 1.5 million acres were inventoried in the assessments, exceeding our target of 1,412,312 acres of public land. Assessments were completed for several high priority allotments, including the Trout Springs, Gusman, and Bull Basin Allotments (Owyhee Field Office), the Hagerman Unit (Jarbidge Field Office), and allotments in the Snake River Breaks Watershed (Four Rivers Field Office). A total of 143 grazing allotments were monitored, exceeding our target of 138 allotments. We completed compliance inspections on a total of 291 grazing allotments, exceeding our target of 281. A total of 142 upland exclosures were maintained, exceeding our target of 78, and a total of 215 riparian exclosures were maintained, exceeding our target of 165.

### ***Early Drought Consultation***

The District consulted with livestock operators in advance of anticipated drought conditions. Through the consultation, the livestock operators with drought conditions on their allotments voluntarily reduced the number of days by 260, the number of livestock by 1,838, and the number of animal unit months by 24,860. Allotments were regularly monitored throughout the summer for adequate forage and water.

## *Permit Renewal*

A total of 43 grazing permits were issued.

## *Grazing Authorizations*

The LSRD completed 654 grazing authorizations, exceeding our target of 555 for the fiscal year.

## *NEPA Compliance*

The District complied with NEPA and ensured that Environmental Assessments (EA's) were sufficient for informed and defensible program decisions. The Owyhee Field Office is effectively responding to a court order from the Ninth Federal District Court to reissue 68 grazing permits with proper NEPA documentation on an accelerated schedule. In cooperation with the Bruneau Sand Dunes State Park, staff from the Jarbidge Field Office developed an EA and decision to provide water and fencing for livestock outside of the park. This will mitigate historical impacts from livestock to the sensitive species, *Cicindela arenicola* (Idaho Dunes tiger beetle), and its associated habitat.

## *Wild Horse and Burro Program*

### *Gatherings and Removals*

---

Gathered and prepared (branded, inoculated, and aged) 176 horses from the Black Mountain, Hardtrigger, and Sands Basin Herd Management Areas. This is a 100 percent removal target success rate. Thirteen of these horses were later returned to the Herd Management Areas to enhance genetic viability.

### *Horses and Burros Offered for Adoption*

A total of 146 horses and 4 burros were adopted, which is a 90 percent success rate. The remaining 17 horses were transported to the Rock Springs Facility in Wyoming.